

GREN General Meeting Minutes Nov. 23, 2010

Chair: John J
Minutes: Susan K
Guest Speaker: Felix Munger WLU

Introductions

Updates:

Pipeline – Susan Bryant

- haven't met since spring due to election/summer etc. Goal to carefully plan role of the pipeline campaign

Water Opportunities and Conservation Act – John Jackson

- passed third reading today – good news - Province has power to require measures that conserve water
http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&Intranet=&BillID=2362

Drinking Water Source Protection Strategy – Gord Nicholls

- new GRCA document – status, needs and problems. Dec. 6 is deadline for comment. Gord Nicholls has read some of it and commented: well-prepared and researched in general, Waterloo Region (chapter 9 - over 400 pages)
- Gord's concerns:
 - a) In executive summary Environmental Protection Zones (EPZ's) excavation activities and transportation corridor threats have no recommendations – are these points of concern?
 - b) Type C or D – large areas of water – no precise definitions – water behind weir at Hidden Valley – recharges 22% of water – downgrade from Type D to C – page 21 – is this a fait accompli?
 - c) EPZ zone of maximum concern in Hidden Valley – what kind of potential contaminants? How up to date is it with privately owned and commercial properties – city is vague when queried

Action: GREN will make written submission, general comments about direction rather than specifics. Send to Susan Koswan susan@gren.ca, ASAP who will wordsmith. John J will help review. Gord will summarize his observations/recommendations.

So far:

- a) if development proceeds in this area, there needs to be a change in the EPZ score with appropriate demands on developer.
- b) Should be stopping development that is a source of drinking water rather than an emergency response that says it would take 2 hours for contaminants to reach critical area. Page 407 – loophole bullet requires comment about 48 hour response time.
- c) have to protect future, not just existing wells

Waterloo Region Official Plan – Kevin Thomason

Sitting at province, waiting for approval. Gravel pit issue likely going to OMB, Region taking on the province on this issue; Dufferin Peel/Halton have similar concerns about controlling new pit applications. Will ROPP be revisited in terms of communicating need for LRT? There was much miscommunication during election, especially about cost. Kevin was interviewed regarding the moraine, activism and planning by Rogers for a 1 hour special on growth that was aired today.

Provincial Policy Statement Amendments – Daphne Nicholls

Ontario Nature, formerly the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, submitted the following key recommendations for the Provincial Policy Statement amendments. The PPS sets the directions for land use planning and development across Ontario. Please add these to the minutes.

1. Require municipalities to protect natural heritage systems. The current PPS recommends, but does not require that municipalities identify and protect natural heritage systems. As a result, the PPS is inconsistently applied across the province, and few municipalities have adopted the recommended systems-based approach to natural heritage planning and protection.
2. Protect regionally significant natural heritage features and rare and imperiled habitats such as alvars, tall grass prairies and savannahs. The PPS fails to specifically protect regionally and locally significant natural heritage systems, weakening the ability of municipalities to restrict development that may negatively impact these features.
3. Protect all remaining wetlands south and east of the Canadian Shield. Though wetlands play a critical role in water storage and filtration, carbon sequestration and habitat provision, they continue to be lost to development. Currently the PPS protects only provincially significant wetlands.
4. Address the current imbalance between aggregate extraction and natural heritage protection. Economically valuable aggregate deposits often occur in areas of rich natural heritage, such as the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Cardon Plain. Aggregate extraction creates significant long-term ecological disturbance, including destruction of habitat through removal of vegetation and soil, alteration of hydrological regimes and drainage patterns and changes to the shape of the land. Yet there is no requirement to prevent, minimize or mitigate environmental impacts to protect natural heritage and other provincial interests when siting pits and quarries. Nor is there any requirement to demonstrate need when considering pit and quarry applications or to recover and recycle aggregate resources to promote conservation. Aggregate extraction receives extraordinary priority over natural heritage protection in the PPS.

Santa Claus parade – Susan Koswan

Organized about a dozen riders (5th year) to ride Bicycle Forest bikes in parade on Sat. Nov. 20 – carbon offset since parade is heavily gas-powered with lots of idling cars and trucks.

Action: GREN decided to cover the cost of \$197.75.

Climate Change Action Network – Lulu Lanteigne

The network is looking for groups to sign on to an open letter to the Prime Minister asking to eliminate tax breaks to the companies that produce oil, gas and coal in the federal 2011 budget. Request for GREN logo to be added.

Action: GREN decided to endorse the letter and Susan K sent GREN logo to Lulu to do so

Guest Speaker - Felix Munger

WLU student of Manuel Reimer in community psychology. Looking at climate change from psychological perspective. Trend now is that funders expect organizations to collaborate or form partnerships. Initial investigation indicates a local need to form an umbrella group for environment.

The project will try to list all the organizations (65 so far), if they're clustering, do those clusters make sense, how well are they working together, what happens when new environmental concerns arise, find out how much and how well they are working together using Social Network Analysis that looks for relationships and creates maps. One goal is to create a stronger voice. Scope is Region of Waterloo.

Another goal is to create a searchable green directory or green book that will be ongoing. Only looking at non-profit organizations because it's a research project. Some have already suggested that the private sector needs to be included to move forward the environmental agenda. The project will look at tradeoffs and benefits of collaboration.

Have asked the Social Planning Council to coordinate an on-line survey to do this.

Comments from GREN members:

- should be categories for individuals who have specific knowledge, but are not affiliated with any specific group.
- Category for "mavericks" who are not "tied" to particular groups
- Concerns that GREN is not acting as a better umbrella org'n
- What is the ultimate goal for humans? Need some coherence in the goal
- The OEN has an outdated list
- Greenrocket.com is developing a database.
- Saeed Parto wrote thesis asking who individuals would contact if looking for permission and information that could be useful
- GREN will participate
- Felix will email list of organizations already contacted

Action: Felix's request and list of environmental organizations will be circulated to GREN members – Susan K will circulate Nov. 24/10 – reply to felixmunger@mac.com

Fluoride Referendum – Robert Fleming

Meeting Wed. Nov. 24 starts 7:00 at Regional Council. Pro-fluoride people will still be advocating to NOT shut off the fluoride. No emails to city councillors, just thank you's afterward.

Action: Susan K sent out email to GREN list Nov. 23/10.

Election follow-up – John Jackson

GREN meet and greet candidates well-attended and a good success. Would have been nice to have had more GREN members. The social aspect worked well. How do we follow up with both the elected officials and those who weren't?

Recommendations/Ideas:

- 1) Plan GREN meet and greet event for week after closing date for candidates
- 2) Yvonne working to educate newly elected councillors
- 3) Invite new city councillors (Kitchener and Waterloo) to GREN meeting. Can't assume that councillors are aware of issues in certain areas. Make it social but educational with focus on water, fear of unknown, dealing with storm water management fee, pipeline
- 4) Walks on moraine, for example, are very successful at educating councillors on the issues in a concrete way and improve GREN's exposure and credibility.
- 5) Triple bottom line thinking – sustainable business development – see how they make the links
- 6) Planners and consultants in Strasburg Creek have never walked where they are making these decisions.
- 7) Bring cameras on these walks. Need "green" channel
- 8) Work on councillors who only rely on staff so they understand the issues on their own
- 9) Suggestion for each of us to contact new councillors with specific issues

Action: Committee John Jackson, Kevin Thomason, Daphne Nichols and Susan Koswan to organize new councillor meeting

Updates

West Side Lands – Lulu Lanteigne

Completed review OMB ruling, said it's municipal issue. Talking to CELA right now. Trying to get in-house solution to resolve that the city blatantly contravened an OMB decision. Working with the integrity commissioner.

Salinity in Water – Greg Michalenko

Looked at water reports and concerned about increased salinity. Spoke with Emil and Michael Frind. Future meeting re reducing using roadsalt.

LRT/Toxics in Air – Robert Milligan

Critical juncture. Need to get middle-class out of their cars, should be using existing rails. Or is it just replacement for I-Express? Need more information about toxics being released and potential side-effects of local industrial polluters.

If we go full tilt on LRT, are we neglecting the rest of the transportation system? What other alternatives are there, eg. The Airbus.

Lengthy Idling of GO Trains

When warming up trains couldn't they use electric heaters since it's low cost energy time of day? Diesel needs to be warmed up to run the most efficiently.

Urban Planning Students from Waterloo – Yvonne Fernandez

want to attend and connect with GREN

GREN meeting dates

Need January meeting for councillors, need executive meeting in early January to set dates for future GREN meetings.